

**STATEMENT  
OF  
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE  
CHAIRMAN  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
ON THE  
JUNE 13, 2001  
HEARING  
ON THE  
CONFIRMATION  
OF  
NEIL McCaleb  
TO SERVE  
AS THE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS  
IN THE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Good Morning. The Committee on Indian Affairs meets this morning to receive testimony on the President's nomination of Mr. Neil McCaleb to serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs in the U.S. Department of the Interior.**

**As those who are regular observers of the Committee know, the Committee on Indian Affairs has traditionally carried out its responsibilities on a bi-partisan basis and I believe, without exception, the Committee addresses the challenges confronting Indian country on a non-partisan basis.**

**So it is, that while there have been some changes in the Senate in recent days, this Committee continues its tradition of a Chairman and Vice-chairman who share the responsibility of conducting hearings and carrying on the business of the Committee as we do today.**

**As originally planned several weeks ago, Senator Campbell will chair this important hearing today, and we will make a report on the proceedings of today's hearings to those members of the Committee who are unable to attend this hearing because of conflicting commitments.**

**With the changes that have come about in the Senate, I also have the responsibility to chair a hearing of the Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations this morning, so unfortunately, I will have to leave this hearing upon conclusion of my opening statement.**

**But first, I want to welcome Mr. Neil McCaleb to the Committee, and to assure you that we look forward to working with you in a bi-partisan fashion, for I believe you know that matters of Indian Affairs are not defined along political lines.**

**Further, and more importantly, I believe that we share a common objective and we serve a common cause – which is to each, in our own way and from our respective positions – do our best to improve contemporary conditions in Indian country and to foster the potential for a promising future for Native America.**

**Appearing before this committee in February, Interior Secretary Norton pledged that her administration of the department would be guided by a policy and commitment to consultation with Tribal Governments.**

**I assume that consultation will also be the touchstone for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs as you work with Tribal Governments in a partnership to carry on the government-to-government relationship and the United States' trust responsibility for Indian lands and resources.**

**All of us are pleased, I am sure, that you begin this undertaking with a recognition that tribal sovereignty is the foundation for this relationship.**

**The economic development of native communities is a priority and an objective that the members of this Committee share with you.**

**You will also have a full agenda in addressing the challenges that you will inherit – the management of Indian Trust Funds will no doubt be another high priority.**

**And I hope that we can work together to improve the federal acknowledgment process by securing the resources necessary to assure the timely and efficient administration of the program.**

**Too many tribes have been waiting for decades to have their petitions considered. Surely, We can do a better job in this area.**

**There are many other issues that we will look forward to discussing with you in the days ahead, and immediately following this hearing, I hope to sit down with Senator Campbell to identify a date and time when we can schedule a business meeting of the Committee so that we might act promptly on your nomination.**

**From the communications that we have been receiving, I would say that Indian country has high hopes for you, Mr. Secretary.**

**I hope that we can arrange to bring your nomination before the full Senate in the very near future.**